

Republicans and Democrats – two contrasting views of the American Dream

When the Democrats and Republicans trot out their patriotism onstage, it can sound like they love two different nations.

Mom, apple pie and the American dream, it seems, can justify almost any policy: Higher taxes on the wealthy or lower taxes on the wealthy. Strengthening the social safety net or reducing dependency on government. Legal abortion or an end to abortion.

Here's a look at some of the contrasting views of freedom and the American way expressed by speakers at the Republican convention last week in Tampa, Fla., and this week's Democratic convention in Charlotte, N.C.:

TAXING WEALTHY AMERICANS

- The American free enterprise system "is dedicated to creating tomorrow's prosperity rather than trying to redistribute today's." — *Republican nominee Mitt Romney.*
- "Being asked to pay your fair share isn't class warfare — it's patriotism." — *Newark, N.J., Mayor Cory Booker.*

SAFETY NET PROGRAMS

- "Under President Obama, the dream of freedom and opportunity has become a nightmare of dependency with almost half of America receiving some government benefit." — *Rick Santorum, former senator and Republican primary candidate.*
- "We believe that government has a role to play, not in solving every problem in everybody's life but in helping people help themselves to the American dream." — *Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick.*

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

- "When I was waiting tables, washing dishes, or mowing lawns for money, I never thought of myself as stuck in some station in life. I was on my own path, my own journey, an American journey where I could think for myself, decide for myself, define happiness for myself. That's what we do in this country. That's the American Dream. That's freedom, and I'll take it any day over the supervision and sanctimony of the central planners." — *Paul Ryan.*
- If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business — you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen. The Internet didn't get invented on its own. Government research created the Internet so that all the companies could make money off the Internet." — *President Barack Obama*

PERSONAL RICHES

- "The centerpiece of the President's entire re-election campaign is attacking success. Is it any wonder that someone who attacks success has led the worst economic recovery since the Great Depression? In America, we celebrate success, we don't apologize for it." — *Mitt Romney*.
- "Mitt Romney, he lives by a different code. To him, American workers are just numbers on a spreadsheet. To him, all profits are created equal, whether made on our shores or off." — *Ted Strickland, former governor of Ohio*.

HOW TO DEAL WITH IMMIGRANTS

- "My grandfather, like millions of other immigrants, didn't come here for some government guarantee of income equality or government benefits to take care of his family. In 1923 there were no government benefits for immigrants except one: Freedom!" — *Rick Santorum*.
- "We believe in an America where going to school doesn't depend on how much money you have. We believe in an America where getting decent health care doesn't depend on how much money you've got. ... We believe in an America where no matter who you are, where you come from, what you look like, what your last name is, you can pursue your own happiness, and you can make it if you try." — *Obama in a campaign speech in Norfolk, Va.*

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

- "Over the past four years, Americans have been led to believe we're just like everybody else, that America isn't unique. But it's not true. We are different. Not because of where we were born, but because of who we are as a people." — *Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell*.
- "We believe in an America that leads with our military, but also takes care of our veterans and stands up for our ideals and shows the power of our example." — *Barack Obama*.

UP BY THEIR BOOT STRAPS

- "I tell students all the time the only way to fail in America is to quit." — *Mitch McConnell*.
- "Today's Republicans and their nominee for president tell us that those first-graders are on their own on their own to deal with their poverty; with ill-prepared young parents, maybe who speak English as a second language; with an underfunded school; with neighborhood crime and blight; with no access to nutritious food and no place for their mom to cash a paycheck; with a job market that needs skills they don't have; with no way to pay for college." — *Deval Patrick*.